

Machiavelli, Hobbes, and the Formation of a Liberal Republicanism in England

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Introduction

This work examines the writings of selected English thinkers of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries with republican sympathies. These writers, I argue, contribute to the reconciliation of elements of republicanism with liberalism that eventuates in a new synthesis – liberal republicanism. This particular formulation is intended to be disruptive of the current thinking on the relation between republicanism and liberalism, because republicanism was, and continues to be, a phenomenon associated, for the most part, with antiquity, whereas liberalism is decidedly a product of modernity. The republicanism of these English thinkers is fundamentally influenced, I will show, by the writings of Niccolò Machiavelli, and their liberalism derives primarily from transformed elements of Thomas Hobbes's thought. The reconciliation of two such apparently contradictory terms – liberalism and republicanism – is unlikely to be a simple story; in fact, the history of that reconciliation is a complicated one.

The philosopher Charles Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, for example, gives voice to the complicated character of the melding of republicanism and liberalism, of elements of antiquity and modernity. What this philosopher expresses as the entanglement of these elements has become in the thought of contemporary scholars and political thinkers a stark polarization: republicanism and liberalism are mutually contradictory. If thinkers evoke republican themes, then they are allied with antiquity and arrayed against the forces of liberal modernity. Because elements once understood as entangled are now simplified and portrayed as dichotomous, it is a crucially important task to clarify what each of the constituent elements is, how they interacted, and how each affected the other. The place to begin the unraveling is with Machiavelli and his English followers, who initiated this blending of antiquity and modernity and who have of late received a great deal of attention. That attention, though, cries out for even greater scrutiny of their writings because it has focused exclusively on the republican and ancient side and, hence, has oversimplified the character of their thought.

We can begin to see the complicated, intertwined nature of liberalism and republicanism when we turn to consider the constituent elements of the liberal republicanism of the English writers I treat. Liberalism posits that individuals are the bearers of natural rights and that all are by nature equal and free. Such natural equality and freedom dictate that there are no natural governors and no natural governed. In order for one individual to have political authority over another, that other must consent to be ruled. Political power, then, finds its origin in the consent of the governed. Contemplating the individual apart from the community on this understanding is not merely possible; in fact, it is absolutely necessary if we hope to understand the proper role and scope of government. Such a consideration reveals that individuals construct government as a mechanism that protects their natural rights. Governments are necessary in order to keep order, because rights can only be protected where law is known and settled and a power exists to enforce it against violators. Thus, liberalism emphasizes that government serves the individual by providing the security necessary to acquire property and to pursue private happiness and by refraining from infringing on the individual's liberty. On this view, government is a human construct intended specifically to serve the individual. The individual is prior to the state.

Because the individual receives such priority in liberalism, the status of the public realm, if not completely uncertain, is certainly diminished with respect to the private realm. The natural rights of individuals are exercised primarily in the private realm. This realm consists of the household, where people acquire possessions and educate their children, and of those voluntary associations, where they worship God and organize projects with like-minded neighbors, for example. The pursuit of these activities appears not to require political activity as such. Politics, of course, is in the background, for a life lived in private requires order, which necessitates that some others make the laws, enforce the laws, and judge and punish offenders. Because not all need tend to these functions, liberalism does not emphasize political participation and seems largely unconcerned with the type of regime, although John Locke, whose name provides an adjective by which to specify a type of liberalism, declares that property cannot be properly protected unless the legislative power "consists, wholly or in part, in Assemblies which are variable."¹ On the basis of this claim, Locke points to a moderate monarchy as a preferred form of government. His specification arises directly from a concern for individual rights, underlining that for the liberal what matters most about politics is the government's promotion of the individuals' interests and well-being.

Republics, particularly the city-states of antiquity, not monarchies, whether absolute or moderated by parliaments, evince the type of intense

¹ John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, para. 138 in *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 361.

political involvement of the citizenry so contrary to a liberal society. Indeed, such republics, where the people conduct the business of the regime, seem not to accord with the primary interests of liberalism: acquisition, industry, and the private pursuit of happiness. It is difficult for individuals to pursue their own interests when they are constantly being pulled into the public arena to debate the proper measures for the common good and, then, asked to sacrifice in order to institute them.

This ready contrast between the political life of the ancient and modern polities did not escape those political philosophers who contemplated the implications of a liberalism on the ascendant. Montesquieu, for example, highlights the chasm between ancient and modern political life, by describing the awe-inspiring political dedication of the citizens of the ancient cities. In addition, though, he points to the possibility of a modern form of republicanism, quite different from the ancient form. Modern republicanism has, in his view, absorbed liberal purposes and improved upon ancient republican practices. In this way, he reveals a more complicated picture of the relation between modern liberalism and republicanism than the one contemporary commentators so often depict.

Montesquieu draws a stark contrast between the political life of the ancients and that of the moderns: "The political men of Greece who lived under popular government recognized no other force to sustain it than virtue. Those of today speak to us only of manufacturing, commerce, finance, wealth, and even luxury."² The engrossment in individual and private concerns, so characteristic of modernity, pushes aside the emphasis on the inculcation of political virtue, so characteristic of antiquity, Montesquieu suggests. He goes on to examine the consequences of that ancient republican emphasis on virtue when he comments that "[m]ost of the ancient peoples lived in governments that had virtue for their principle, and when that virtue was in full force, things were done in those governments that we no longer see and that astonish our small souls."³ What the moderns find so striking about the deeds of the ancients is the degree to which the citizens put the interests of the state before their own: "[P]olitical virtue is a renunciation of oneself, which is always a very painful thing."⁴ So self-denying does Montesquieu find the citizen virtue of the ancient republics that, in his chapter entitled "What Virtue Is in the Political State," he compares the ancient republican citizens with the extreme ascetics of the modern world: "Love of the homeland leads to goodness in mores, and goodness in mores leads to love of the homeland. The less we can satisfy our particular passions, the more we give

² Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* 1.3.3, trans. and ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 22–3.

³ *Ibid.*, 1.4.4, 35.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.4.5, 35.

ourselves up to passions for the general order. Why do monks so love their order? Their loves comes from the same thing that makes their order intolerable to them. . . . The more austere it is, that is, the more it curtails their inclinations, the more force it gives to those that remain.”⁵ In this manner, Montesquieu indicates the extent to which the demands of the ancient polities transformed the natural inclinations of those who inhabited them.

Although Montesquieu finds the principle of virtue as self-renunciation so necessary to the republics of antiquity, he does not associate that principle with republicanism simply. He finds that England is a “republic” that “hides under the form of monarchy,”⁶ and England, as Montesquieu presents it, is certainly not a republic that promotes the self-renunciation of its citizens. That modern nation, where the citizens speak of commerce, finance, and even of luxury, takes not virtue for its principle, but rather “political liberty” for “its direct purpose.” Political liberty he defines “in a citizen” as “that tranquillity of spirit which comes from the opinion each one has of his security.”⁷ Individual security, not selfless dedication to the polity, is the focus of the modern republic, he claims.

Moreover, the modern form of republic no longer demands that its citizens constantly debate and determine its policy. In modern practice, representation replaces participation; Montesquieu heartily approves of this innovation: “A great vice in most ancient republics was that the people had the right to make resolutions for action. . . . The people should not enter the government except to choose their representatives.”⁸ In this comment, he suggests the superiority of modern to ancient republicanism.

Montesquieu finds in England, therefore, not only a model for a new type of republicanism but, in some important ways, an improvement over the ancient type. His modern form of republicanism relies neither on the moral character of its citizens nor on their direct political participation. It is a republicanism that embraces the liberty of the individual, understood as the feeling of individual security, as its purpose. This modern republic relies on institutional means to achieve that purpose: the separation of powers as embodied in England’s constitution.⁹ Montesquieu’s modern republicanism has thoroughly reconciled itself to liberal purposes.

Not only ancient practice but prominent elements of ancient philosophy, of course, furnish a stark contrast to liberalism’s emphasis on individuals and their desires. Aristotle, after all, declares both that the city is prior to the individual and that it is natural.¹⁰ Further, he explicitly denies that a

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.5.2, 42–3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.5.19, 70; see also 2.11.5, 156, and 3.19.27, 326–7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.11.5, 156, and 2.11.6, 157.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.11.6, 160.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.11.6, 156–66.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *The Politics* 1.2, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 1253a19–29.

city can be a product of a compact. Politics, according to his conception, is intended to improve citizens, not merely to prevent citizens from committing injustices against each other and to promote business transactions, bare requirements of political life, he concedes.¹¹ Although acknowledging that the latter purposes, which, in fact, closely approximate the liberal conception of politics, are necessary for a city, Aristotle declares that they do not approach the city's true function. On the basis of such declarations, of course, Aristotle's thought permits for a much wider swath of the intrusion of politics into the lives of citizens. Further, the ancient philosopher defines the political relationship as ruling and being ruled in turn.¹² Participation, again, calls liberalism to account. The aspirations both of ancient politics and political philosophy, then, in some salient respects oppose themselves to the very purposes of liberalism.

Contrary to Montesquieu's suggestion that some new variant of republicanism could, and had, in fact, accommodated itself to the individualism of the liberal regime – as evidenced by the political experience of the English – recent scholars of intellectual history and political theory argue that adherents of republicanism not only persevered in maintaining their allegiance to ancient thought but also successfully contained the encroachment of modern, liberal ideas, in England and in America as well. In this way, these scholars offer an excessively polarized view of the relation between republicanism and liberalism: republicanism is necessarily ancient and is thoroughly hostile to liberalism and its purposes.

This thoroughly dichotomous depiction of the relation of republicanism and liberalism has had a profound impact in a number of disciplines. Perhaps deepest is its impact on the study of the American founding. During the second half of the twentieth century, a group of scholars transformed the study of the thought surrounding the founding period in America, which conventional wisdom had ruled thoroughly Lockean, by maintaining that classical republicanism ruled the thoughts and motivated the actions of the Americans. Although the details of their assessments vary, they are united in claiming that liberalism derived from Locke was not foremost in the American mind at the creation of the United States. Instead, they claim, the Americans were shaped by the classical republican tradition that had found fecund soil in Renaissance Italy, and that had then traveled to England with the thought of Machiavelli, taking root in the thought of various Englishmen who opposed the crown during and after the English Civil Wars.¹³ When it came time for the Americans themselves to oppose

¹¹ Ibid., 3.9, 1280a31–7.

¹² E.g., ibid., 7.14, 1332b24–6.

¹³ The influential work of J. G. A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner is responsible for the view that Machiavelli is the source for classical republicanism in the modern world. Pocock's sweeping book, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican*

the crown, they drew inspiration from their English predecessors.¹⁴ These English thinkers, important scholars claim, had embraced the ancient and distinguished tradition of thought that spoke in terms of virtue rather than self-interest, looking to what the individual could sacrifice for the common life of the state.¹⁵

This historical scholarship, which interprets treatises from the Renaissance, tracts from the English Civil Wars, and pamphlets from the

Tradition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), presents Machiavelli as receiving the civic humanism of Aristotle, transmitting it to England where Harrington gave it further expression, an expression that served as inspiration for, in Pocock's formulation, the "neo-Harringtonians," members of the opposition both before and after the Glorious Revolution. These opposition writers, then, became the source for the civic humanist tradition in America that survived long after the period of the framing of the Constitution. Skinner, too, depicts Machiavelli as a classical republican, but one who owes much to "Roman stoic sources" (*The Renaissance*, vol. 1 of *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978], xiv).

¹⁴ Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transmission, Development and Circumstance of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the War with the Thirteen Colonies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), brings forward the notion that republican ideas were influential not only in England after the hope of their full implementation had long lapsed, but also in America. She shows, for instance, how the thought of innovators during the periods of the English Civil Wars and Restoration influenced the character of the Whig opposition after the Glorious Revolution through the reign of George III. Her commonwealthmen, however, are not opposed to liberalism. Indeed, she includes Locke's work in the "sacred canon" revered by the "Real Whigs of the next century" (4–5). Thus, she considers his thought (58–67) and considers the impact it had on the eighteenth-century thinkers (e.g., 253, 267, 297, 302, 306–8, 318, 325–6, 378, 383). Cf. Pocock's statement: "It is clear . . . that Locke played no predominant role in the formation of what Caroline Robbins has called 'the Whig canon' in the tradition of 'the eighteenth-century commonwealthmen'" (J. G. A. Pocock, "Authority and Property: The Question of Liberal Origins," in *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985], 66). Robbins's work clearly influenced Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1967; reprint and enlarged, Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1992), 34–6. Like Robbins, Bailyn does not offer these seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers as a stark alternative to liberal thought. He suggests instead not only that this tradition coexisted with Locke's thought but that Americans embraced both simultaneously, e.g., 36 and 45. Although Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969; reprint, New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), agrees with Robbins and Bailyn on the influence of the English opposition tradition in America, he considerably modifies its character from that which they describe. Citing an early article of Pocock ("Machiavelli, Harrington, and English Political Ideologies," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 22 [1965]: 549–83), he argues that when the Americans appealed to the English Whig opposition tradition they were, in fact, appealing to the classical antiquity that had traveled to England via Machiavelli (32–3). With this judgment, Wood offers the English radical Whigs as an alternative to Locke's modern and liberal influence.

¹⁵ Joyce Appleby explains that "classical republicanism made civic virtue – the capacity to place the good of the commonwealth above one's own – the lynchpin of constitutional stability and liberty-preserving order" (*Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992], 21).

American Revolutionary War, has influenced contemporary political discussions. Many who reflect on contemporary politics and society ask with increasing frequency and urgency how, if governments are intended to serve individuals, do they elicit the service of citizens on their behalf, the very type of service that would nourish and promote the public realm. The community seems unequipped to make any claims on the individual. As a result, the community suffers as the claims of the individual are elevated. According to these thinkers, such a priority produces selfish individuals alienated from their communities and their fellow citizens; it teaches individuals to claim rights and to evade duties. Driven by their dissatisfaction with contemporary, liberal politics, they appeal to the republican tradition and its battle with liberalism (as depicted by the historians) in order to posit an alternative. Liberalism produces the unsatisfactory political life that marks the contemporary situation, and republicanism is its vanquished but intrepid opponent that harkens back to the vital politics of the Italian cities of the Renaissance and the city-states of Greece and of Rome. The worthier contender in this battle, these contemporary thinkers maintain, did not emerge victorious. The contemporary citizen would do well to learn from the experiences of a more fulfilling, because more selfless, political life.¹⁶

This book makes the case that the relation between republicanism and liberalism need not result in this hostile antinomy. Indeed, such a thing as a liberal republicanism is not only possible but was actually present very early in the history of liberalism. The process of reconciliation between the two, I argue, began even before Locke's *Second Treatise* was written, let alone promulgated. This reconciliation occurred in the thought of the

¹⁶ Classical republicanism and civic humanism furnish an alternative standard by which scholars not only in political theory but in such fields as law and public policy can criticize what they view as liberalism's excessive influence on the individual. The so-called communitarian critics of liberalism became associated with this tradition. See, e.g., Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1996). He states there, for instance, that "the republican tradition, with its emphasis on community and self-government, may offer a corrective to our impoverished civic life" (6). For his reliance on the depiction of the classical republican tradition put forth by Pocock and Skinner, see, e.g., 26 and n. 2. For a perspective on this tradition's impact on law, see, for example, the special issue "Symposium: The Republican Civic Tradition," *Yale Law Journal* 97 (1988): 1493-1723. Don Herzog offers a critical assessment of the implications of the application of civic humanism to contemporary American politics in "Some Questions for Republicans," *Political Theory* 14 (1986): 473-93. Jeffrey C. Isaac criticizes the republican and communitarian positions as oversimplifying liberalism and suggests that republicanism and liberalism need not be seen as irreconcilable in "Republicanism vs. Liberalism? A Reconsideration," *History of Political Thought* 9 (1988): 349-77. James Hankins provides a helpful and concise review of the impact of classical republicanism on the academy and politics in his introduction to *Renaissance Civic Humanism*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-7; see also Steven C. A. Pincus, "Neither Machiavellian Moment nor Possessive Individualism: Commercial Society and the Defenders of the English Commonwealth," *American Historical Review* 103 (1998): 705-11.

very English writers to whom recent scholars have pointed as the source of the classical republican tradition for the later Americans, so radically opposed to liberalism.¹⁷ These writers expressed varying degrees of republican sympathies during and after the English Civil Wars.¹⁸ These writings that I

¹⁷ Blair Worden, a distinguished and prolific commentator on the writers in this English republican tradition, notes the presence of the salient doctrines that constitute a liberal understanding of politics: "Usually writing in opposition to the prevailing power, they drew heavily on ideas of contract and resistance and of natural rights which were not peculiarly republican" ("English Republicanism," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700*, ed. J. H. Burns with the assistance of Mark Goldie [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], 443). Nevertheless, he does not examine the sources and significance of these doctrines in any detail. Other scholars, too, have suggested that the republican tradition need not be seen as hostile to liberalism. See, e.g., Steven M. Dworetz, *The Unvarnished Doctrine: Locke, Liberalism, and the American Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 101; Stephen Holmes, *Passions and Constraints: On the Theory of Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 5 and 30; and Christopher Nadon, "Aristotle and the Republican Paradigm: A Reconsideration of Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment*," *Review of Politics* 58 (1996): 677–98. Thomas L. Pangle states: "This new republicanism, this new interpretation of the experience of the classical cities, was not at all as opposed to the spirit of Locke's teaching, . . . as has been recently claimed" (*The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988], 30). Paul A. Rahe challenges the classical republican interpretation when he identifies a critical break between ancient and modern republicanism. He argues that the modern republicans, beginning with Machiavelli, reject the Aristotelian premise that locates the foundation for political life in the human capacity for *logos*. See Paul Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern: Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). Rahe further undermines this interpretation by showing how such modern republicans as Machiavelli and Harrington helped shape Locke's thought, both when he embraced and rejected their ideas (469–79; on Machiavelli's influence on Locke, see also Pangle, *Modern Republicanism*, 260). Pincus also questions the assumption of an antimony between liberalism and republicanism by arguing that those who supported a commercial economy in England during the seventeenth century invented "a new ideology" "which valued human choice, the human capacity to create wealth, and epochal change in human history" and which "can no longer be called classical republicanism but is better understood as liberalism." He continues: "It is a liberalism, however, that should not be seen as antagonistic to republicanism" ("Commercial Society and the Defenders of the English Commonwealth," 708). Whereas Pincus accepts the designation of classical republican for Machiavelli and Harrington, I do not. Although I agree that they do not support a commercial society, I argue that their ideas concerning politics cannot be said to be classical. Michael P. Zuckert, *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), argues that Locke's thought combined with Whig political science in the early eighteenth century to form a new republicanism that would fundamentally influence the American republic (see particularly 312–19). My study examines the formation of such an amalgamation at an earlier stage. Richard Dagger, *Civic Virtues: Rights, Citizenship, and Republican Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), finds it necessary to construct a contemporary version of "republican liberalism," because one "has not truly developed historically" (5).

¹⁸ I use the term "republican" loosely. Those who wrote after the Restoration, for obvious reasons, did not openly advocate republicanism. Nevertheless, the term does convey something important about their thought in that they are disposed to admire republics and seek

examine belong to Marchamont Nedham, James Harrington, Henry Neville, Algernon Sidney, and John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon (who together coauthored a series of editorials entitled *Cato's Letters*).¹⁹ Their liberal republicanism eventuates in an understanding of politics that makes the private primary – that is, the rights of individuals – but relies heavily on a public means to effect that end. It brings the citizens into the public realm by relying on them not only to elect their representatives but also to be constantly vigilant so that they can act with dispatch and decisively – even vengefully – when those representatives forsake their interests and violate their rights. It blends liberalism with Machiavelli's republicanism.

The Foundations of Liberal Republicanism

The republicanism of the writers I examine derives primarily from Machiavelli's *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy* – a republicanism far removed from that which can be termed classical – and their liberalism primarily from certain themes Hobbes expounds in his various writings, which these writers transform to fulfill their liberal purposes.²⁰ Machiavelli

to emulate their practice to the extent that political circumstances in England permit. In addition, England's constitution did permit them to view their nation through the lens of the mixed regime, in a manner akin to Montesquieu's suggestion that England was at base a form of republic. In Worden's words the English republicans' "proposals were flexible, and the form of government often mattered less to them than its spirit. The term republican was not, on the whole, one which they sought, and was more commonly one of abuse. Nevertheless, a republican tradition can be identified which was to enter the mainstream of eighteenth-century political ideas in Britain, on the continent, and in America" ("English Republicanism," 443). Quentin Skinner, who had previously referred to thinkers in this tradition as republican, now expresses hesitation in so terming them (*Liberty before Liberalism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998], 11, n. 31; 54–5, n. 176). See also David Wootton's discussion of the word "republicanism" and its uses ("The Republican Tradition: From Commonwealth to Common Sense," introduction to *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society, 1649–1776*, ed. David Wootton [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994], 2–7).

¹⁹ A case could be made for including additional writers. The thought of the particular writers I have selected for examination, I believe, tells a particularly coherent story. I have chosen not to treat John Milton, for example, who was a very prominent republican during the Civil Wars. Although at points his writings refer to a contract, ultimately his thought is too deeply embedded in biblical revelation to qualify as a precursor to liberal thought. See Zuckert's treatment of these issues, *Natural Rights and New Republicanism*, 79–93. Milton's commonplace book, where he transcribed passages from the works he was reading, shows him to be a student of Machiavelli. For more recent considerations of Machiavelli's influence on Milton, see Victoria Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric: From the Counter-Reformation to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), and Blair Worden, "Milton's Republicanism and the Tyranny of Heaven," in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, ed. Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner, and Maurizio Viroli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 225–45.

²⁰ Steven B. Smith, *Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), maintains that a combination of elements from the writings of

and Hobbes, then, are the primary sources of this liberal republicanism, but the thought of each had to be radically transformed before either could contribute to this new combination. As my examination of the thought of each illustrates, neither Machiavelli nor Hobbes would endorse this synthesis had they known to what purposes their writings would be put. Liberal republicanism could hold no allure for either of them, although each offered essential components of it, nevertheless.

One of the most important elements that Machiavelli contributes to this particular form of republicanism is an intense dedication to a democratic republicanism. He, in fact, makes prominent claims in favor of the people and denounces, in their name, the tradition of “all the writers” on politics as being too aristocratic.²¹ The supporters of an aristocratic republicanism, he observes, would reject out of hand Rome’s political life, pronouncing that the people had too prominent a role there: not only were the people able to enforce their demands against the nobility, but one such demand resulted in the institution of the tribunate, which gave the people and their supporters a direct voice in the government. The people’s prominent role in Rome’s governance resulted in a chaotic political realm and contributed to the republic’s ultimate collapse. In contrast, Machiavelli has no such scruples. He endorses Rome precisely because it embraced the people.

Liberal republicanism, as we shall see, concerns itself with the people and their pursuits. It seeks to serve their own ends. Machiavelli’s republicanism, then, serves liberal republicanism’s purposes by bringing this class forward as worthy to participate in government. Machiavelli, though, would not endorse liberal republicanism’s ultimate position on the people. As my chapter on Machiavelli emphasizes, his endorsement of the people is not an end in itself but a means to his own end of war and empire. In his view, any state capable of acquiring and maintaining an empire must have as many people as possible armed as soldiers to fight in this cause. His overture to the people originates from this necessity. In Machiavelli’s *Discourses*, his own concerns consistently trump the people’s.

In order to produce an aggressive republic, Machiavelli sets himself the task of evaluating the appetites of the two classes, the people and the great. The people desire security and property, whereas the great desire dominance and honor. He constructs his republic squarely on the desires of each. He determines that his purpose is served – his purpose of creating a belligerent republic – if both classes can to a degree satisfy their desires. Neither, though,

Hobbes and of Machiavelli influenced what he terms Spinoza’s democratic liberalism (see 23, 32–4, 131–4, and 146–7). Thus, not only England, but also the Continent saw Machiavelli’s influence on later liberal thinkers.

²¹ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1.58.1. I cite this edition by book, chapter, and paragraph number.

can satisfy its desires to too great a degree. If the satisfaction of either were to occur, either the people would have overturned the great or the great, the people. In either case, the resulting form of government would be incapable of maintaining an acquiring army. Again, his republicanism serves his overarching purpose of war and empire.

Because war is Machiavelli's purpose, his republic is deeply indebted not only to the people, who furnish the body of his army, but also to the great, whose desire for honor fuels the pursuit of war. He understands, however, the dangers of the intense desire for distinction that moves the great, dangers exacerbated by his militaristically acquisitive republic that both unleashes and fosters such a potentially dangerous desire. He recognizes that some citizens, in fact, will manifest the most intense form of that desire, the desire for tyranny. In order for the republic to counter this danger, he teaches ingratitude toward the most illustrious. For instance, when an individual, previously rewarded for great deeds, breaks the laws of the state, the state cannot balance the past benefits against the current wrong: it must punish most harshly without regard to past service. A republic, in his view, cannot afford to indulge in hero worship; rather, it must display a deep cynicism toward the great, being always alert to the dangers the most ambitious pose and constantly counteracting those dangers.

Even at this juncture, much can be gleaned from Machiavelli's thought. His republicanism embraces a civil life characterized by tumult. He rejects the teachings of classical philosophy that emphasize harmony in political life, because he relishes conflict and dissension. This struggle between the two classes originates from their desires and passions. He intends not to educate their passions, not to teach them to put the collective good before their own individual good. As he says in *The Prince*, "truly it is a very natural and ordinary thing to desire to acquire, and always, when men do it who can, they will be praised or not blamed."²² His purposes are well served if the many and the few act on their own selfish passions – if the many act to acquire property and the few honor. All of this is to nurture war. Thus, he rejects Aristotle's claim that war is for the sake of peace.²³ He envisions no such peace.

The English republicans glean from the teachings of their Italian master that government should give the people a prominent place and should actually base itself on the passions of its citizens. Some even inure themselves to the prospect of civil strife. Indeed, some learn from Machiavelli to judge both that tumults in a state is a sign of its good health and that stern punishment is necessary to maintain a state's health. In addition, some even are drawn into Machiavelli's orbit precisely because of his unrepentantly bellicose

²² Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 3.14. I cite this edition by chapter, followed by page number.

²³ Aristotle, *Politics* 7.14, 1333a30–6, 1334a4–5, and 7.15, 1334a15.

republicanism. This attraction, though, would turn to repulsion in other thinkers before the liberal elements of the synthesis could fully gel.

Hobbes's thought, too, serves as a source for liberal republicanism. In order for the English republicans to draw on both thinkers, there must be some areas of compatibility between these two thinkers, and there are. Despite some salient and profound differences, certain elements of Hobbes's thought are fully compatible with Machiavelli's, and others, although certainly not compatible, are, in some sense, extensions of the Italian's positions – whether knowing extensions or not.²⁴ In many cases, those extensions of Machiavelli's positions serve what are incipient liberal positions. For example, Hobbes's thought serves those positions when he posits that human beings are equal, that citizens possess a natural right that can serve as a claim against the government, that the people should attain their desired peace, and, thus, that acquisition should result only from peaceful means.

The philosopher of Malmesbury, like Machiavelli, emphasizes the passionate nature of human beings and finds that government must be rooted in those passions.²⁵ When he delves deeply into the passions, he finds that at base all human beings fear for their lives. Machiavelli, as we shall see, would not necessarily disagree with this judgment, but Hobbes draws political ramifications from this principle far beyond what could win the Italian's approval. According to Hobbes, the fear of death induces people to consent to a government or to embrace a conquering power in order to preserve their lives. Because government serves the citizens who construct it, his government is specifically designed to serve them by protecting against the fear of violent death and promoting a positive attachment to a life that provides comfort. Peace is the thing most needful, in Hobbes's view, because only when it reigns can the fear of violent death be assuaged and a comfortable and pleasing life be promoted.

According to Hobbes, only an absolute, indeed, only a terrifyingly powerful sovereign can furnish stability and peace. No republican is he; republics, he judges, confound his purposes. They are too chaotic, too warlike, too filled with orators who seek their own personal advancement. More intensely than any liberal, he decries the tumultuous public realm and seeks sanctuary in the private realm with the wish that politics itself could evaporate. By

²⁴ It is certainly an important and interesting question whether Hobbes knew Machiavelli's work and intentionally transformed it. On the controversy regarding this question, see my subsequent discussion.

²⁵ Albert O. Hirschman finds that Machiavelli is the source both for a more realistic analysis of human behavior and for the notion that governments could produce favorable results by "pitting passions against passions" (*The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977], 41; see also 13 and 33). These notions, Hirschman finds, were to combine, and their united force was to play a transformative role in social, political, and economic thought through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

accepting Machiavelli's notion that human beings are driven by their passions to acquire, but by rejecting Machiavelli's promotion of war, Hobbes endorses most zealously the central pursuit of liberalism, the acquisition of property through peaceful – rather than martial – pursuits.²⁶

As opposed as their views are on the desirability of war, Hobbes's antipathy to war is again an outgrowth, albeit an extreme one, of Machiavelli's own position on the people. The Florentine advocates a prominent role of the people in a state because only when they have so prominent a role can a state put them under arms as the main force for empire. Machiavelli himself reveals the extreme danger of his argument in favor of the people. If the people had their way – if they were to become victorious in the internal war between the many and the great – they could act on their greatest desire, their desire for security. As a result, war would be eliminated. He, of course, wishes to avert such an eventuality, whereas Hobbes endeavors to promote it. If Machiavelli can be said to oppose the tradition of writers and philosophers when he jettisons their aristocratic sensibilities, it must be concluded that Hobbes goes completely over to the side of the people, endeavoring to make them and their passions prevail. He wishes for them to attain the rewards of their fondest hopes: peace, security, and a comfortable life.

Other aspects of Hobbes's thought bear the marks of his embrace of the people. He outlines a scenario in which all construct government. The establishment of government can occur when all individuals consent to turn over their right to all things to a mighty sovereign. Founders of political life, in his conception, are not half-mythological individuals possessing rare and awe-inspiring qualities, as they are in Machiavelli's. Instead, anyone at all can participate in a founding. Moreover, Hobbes does not describe his sovereign, this figure elected by all to protect them, as possessing special abilities. What makes Hobbes's sovereign so awe-inspiring, so fearful, is that he or she possesses the former rights of all. Hobbes does not endow his sovereign with unique attributes because he endows no one with them. He is a radical egalitarian, who challenges the notion that some individuals are more beloved by nature than others. No one, he argues, is privileged by being so strong or so smart that he or she has a marked advantage over others. Nature bestows its gifts equally to human beings, Hobbes argues, and, as a result, all feel the cold vulnerability of the state of nature, which is a state of war.

This overriding sense of vulnerability, Hobbes hopes, will drive all to embrace not only the comforts but also the inconveniences of civil society. People are driven to this state in order to protect their lives. Nature dictates,

²⁶ Paul A. Rahe maintains that a number of modern philosophers "turned against [Machiavelli's] exaltation of political glory" in this fashion ("Antiquity Surpassed: The Repudiation of Classical Republicanism," in Wootton, *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society*, 242).

he says, that individuals can never renounce this right to protect their lives. As a result, one can struggle justifiably, for instance, against the king's minister who takes one to the gallows. The right to life, then, is the only right of nature that individuals retain. Therefore, unlike Machiavelli, Hobbes posits the critical notion that the individual could, in certain circumstances, claim a right against the government.

Despite Hobbes's positing of this right to life, the only thing that prevents sovereigns, in Hobbes's understanding, from making their subjects their prey is the good sense that tells them that a sovereign whose people are rendered weak from the sovereign's own depredations is a weak sovereign. This is a thin veil, indeed, that separates the subjects' comfort, liberty, and security from a condition that could, in certain critical respects, be even worse than the state of nature. Locke says as much when he notes the illogic of simultaneously endowing a sovereign with so much power but failing to offer the individual protections against that power: "He being in a much worse condition who is exposed to the Arbitrary Power of one Man, who has the Command of 100000. than he that is expos'd to the Arbitrary Power of 100000. single Men."²⁷

Hobbes is not a liberal thinker because he is not a partisan of a mild government that concerns itself with protecting the liberties and property of its citizens. Nevertheless, it is easy to see how another could use Hobbes's purposes against him in order to arrive at a liberal position: security is certainly not promoted when the monarch, still armed with all the rights of nature, is furnished with the force of all. All can become the prey of Hobbes's leviathan. This recognition forces the conclusion that if Hobbes's end is to be served, security must be protected by enlarging the scope of the natural rights that individuals retain under government to include the right to liberty and to property.

Some of the English Machiavellians did just that; they embraced some of Hobbes's doctrines and endeavored to find a better, more secure way to promote his ends. In the process, they became liberals. But also being the students of Machiavelli, they manifested decidedly republican sympathies as well. Indeed, they found that republicanism provided a means for the people themselves to protect their natural rights. Thus, the liberal republicanism of these English writers is a spirited liberalism, a liberalism in which there is decidedly a public space. That public space provides a place for citizens to contend for their own rights. That contention is so heated because citizens understand that self-interest motivates their leaders. As a result of the passions of the rulers, the ruled must be vigilant to protect their rights. A vigorous public realm is so necessary precisely because their republicanism is so hardheaded. Although the public realm they envision is vigorous, ultimately

²⁷ Locke, *Second Treatise*, para. 137, 359–60.

the activity that takes place there serves the private realm because it serves the individual's rights. There is a modern, not an ancient, republicanism.

The English writers who fashioned this liberal republicanism had to be selective when they appealed to the thought of Machiavelli and Hobbes. They knew for what they were searching when they ransacked the works of these two thinkers to support the political life they envisioned. Both Machiavelli and Hobbes provided them with key elements of their understanding, but they embraced only some elements of each, transformed some of the rest, and eschewed those they could not appropriate or change.

The Formation of the Synthesis

This liberal republicanism did not emerge fully formed. Nedham, the first whose writings I examine, did much to transform Hobbes's teachings in a liberal direction, and thus much to effect this reconciliation, but each of the succeeding chapters in this study presents a stage in the process in the creation of this liberal republicanism. Each of the English republicans whom I treat draws on different elements of the thought of Machiavelli and Hobbes to offer a different combination of their teachings.

The final reconciliation occurs, I argue, in the thought of Trenchard and Gordon, writing as "Cato." In order to provide a fuller picture of what liberal republicanism is, I begin in this overview with what will be the end, with the conclusions that Cato, the expositor of a truly liberal republicanism, reaches. Cato is the only one of the thinkers I examine who had access to Locke's writings,²⁸ an access of which Cato obviously made generous use. For instance, not only does he appeal to Lockean doctrines, which, in fact, appear in some of the works of his predecessors as transformed Hobbesian doctrines – such as a state of nature in which all are equal and the notion that government itself is instituted through the consent of the governed in order to protect certain rights – but he also endorses the genuinely Lockean right of resistance to be wielded when governors fail to protect those rights. Cato is a true liberal.

Cato's Lockean liberalism, though, does not drive out some prominent and authentic Machiavellian sentiments. In particular, he evidences Machiavelli's own ambivalence toward the most ambitious in a state ("the great") on Machiavelli's own grounds. Cato displays at once a deep appreciation for the great because their passion for distinction can drive them to

²⁸ Blair Worden raises the intriguing question of what type of liberties did the editor of Algernon Sidney's *Discourses*, published in 1698, take with the manuscript. See Blair Worden, *Roundhead Reputations: The English Civil Wars and the Passions of Posterity* (London: Penguin Press, 2001). Although Locke's writings were not available to Sidney, they would have been available to the editor who prepared his manuscript for publication. See my discussion in Chapter 6.

magnificent accomplishments, as well as an acute awareness that their passions can pose a very grave threat to the state. To counter this danger, he closely follows Machiavelli's teaching on the necessity of ingratitude toward the most illustrious men when they commit crimes, an ingratitude that itself must issue in spectacular punishments. Because he allows the great such a large arena to pursue their desires and also allows the people the ability to challenge them, he not only accepts but relishes a tumultuous political life, as does Machiavelli.

As genuine as these Machiavellian sentiments are, Cato's teaching regarding the great is not strictly Machiavellian. Like Machiavelli, he offers glory seekers a great deal of latitude within the realm of politics, but he differs from the Italian in two important ways: he withholds from the ambitious access to the realm of war, where they traditionally sought honor, but proffers in its stead a new realm – that of commerce – where they can compete for honor. This move on Cato's part is most significant. Indeed, before republicanism could become truly liberal, it had to shed its romance with military adventures. Cato bids farewell to that lingering attraction that had prevented most of the earlier English Machiavellians from fully embracing liberalism. As a result, Cato commits his full allegiance to the party of the people, which seeks property and security. He agrees with Machiavelli that to desire to acquire is an ordinary and natural thing, but he will only follow the people's path to that increase – the path of peace rather than of war. As a result, Cato's Machiavellian spirit unflinchingly serves the protection of Lockean rights. This Machiavellian sensibility results in a spirited politics: the spirited great seeking distinction, and the spirited many vigilantly guarding their rights.

While Cato's reconciliation occurs in the early eighteenth century, well after the Bill of Rights and the Act of Settlement, Nedham, writing as a journalist during the Interregnum more than half a century earlier, without the writings of Locke on which to draw, offers a surprising anticipation of Cato's liberalism. At one point, he argues that political power should be distributed by the consent of the people, who establish government to protect their liberty and security, and that the people can withdraw their consent when the governors fail to provide for their security.

In addition, although famous as a turncoat, having written at different times in favor both of the king and Parliament, when in his republican mood Nedham seems to have learned his republicanism from Machiavelli's *Discourses*. He expresses admiration for republican Rome, retells many of Machiavelli's stories, and conveys the Machiavellian lessons deriving from those stories concerning such Machiavellian themes as the necessity of ingratitude, the desirability of tumults, and how the pursuit of individual passions can further the common good of a republic. Moreover, he learns from the Florentine to bring the people into the political realm, but he does not follow the logic that brings Machiavelli to the choice of a democratic republic. Nedham seems not overly concerned – as is Machiavelli – that the people,

once in the political realm, be used for the prosecution of a republic's wars. Instead, this Englishman brings the people into the political realm in order for them to protect their own rights and liberties. In this, he is very much like Cato. Unlike Cato, however, he is extremely hesitant to cite Machiavelli's authority when he is clearly drawing on it. Thus, Nedham's fundamental differences with Cato derive from the facts that he could not draw on Locke's liberal political thought and that he is much more reticent to proclaim his debt to Machiavelli.

Harrington is a Machiavellian who focuses on some particular Machiavellian themes in order to dispute the Florentine's views. The depth of his disputes with Machiavelli is rather paradoxical, given the explicit praise he lavishes on him. The paradoxical character of the treatment he accords his sources is actually even deeper, because as much as he praises Machiavelli, he criticizes Hobbes. Despite all appearances, however, he agrees more with Hobbes than with Machiavelli on some of the most central issues of politics. Apparently, Hobbes receives his vociferous criticism and Machiavelli his praise, because the former supports monarchies and the latter republics. Nevertheless, he puts this disagreement regarding forms of government aside to follow Hobbes in being most wary of the ambitions of the great and in favoring a tranquil domestic realm. As a result of these Hobbesian concerns, he explicitly opposes Machiavelli's views with regard to tumults, and he dismisses Rome as too chaotic to provide an adequate republican model.

Rather than imitating ancient republican Rome, Harrington, in fact, devises his own model. In pursuing domestic tranquillity, he envisions a republic in which citizens do not strive to develop the moral character necessary to restrain their passions (as Aristotle recommends), but which can be perfect even if its citizens are imperfect. To effect this form of perfection, he relies on institutions and laws to contain what he regards as the politically deleterious passions of the citizens who populate his republic. His most famous device, in fact, is an agrarian law designed to limit the amount of property the republic's most wealthy citizens could hold. Such a provision, he believes, would go a long way to preventing the ravenous few from depleting the possessions of the many. In this way, it would help maintain the people in quiet. In this reliance on institutional remedies, Harrington is decidedly a modern, a fact attested to by a successor, Walter Moyle, a radical Whig and vocal admirer.²⁹ In *An Essay upon the Constitution of the Roman Government*,

²⁹ Moyle is another of the English republicans, and his thought contributes to the synthesis I outline here. I have chosen not to examine his thought in detail in this work because I do not believe it adds anything critical to the mix. Like Neville, Sidney, and Cato, he is an admirer of Harrington but finds himself diverging from his thought in important ways. In some of these ways, he anticipates the thought of Cato, but Cato's thought is much more developed. In fact, in 1697 Moyle collaborated with John Trenchard in writing *An Argument, Shewing that a Standing Army is Inconsistent with a Free Government, and Absolutely Destructive to the Constitution of the English Monarchy* (London, 1697), "the widest circulated and most